



File Code: 1950

Date: December 16, 2009

Dear Interested Citizen:

The George Washington and Jefferson National Forests (GWJ) are proposing a multi-year, forest-wide project with **two proposed actions: 1) Control infestations of nonnative invasive plants (NNIP) forest-wide; and 2) Control unwanted woody vegetation in wildlife openings, roadside corridors and utility corridors.**

The purpose of the first action is to reduce or eliminate infestations of the most aggressive NNIPs on the Forests, using an integration of manual, mechanical, cultural, and chemical control methods. The purpose of the second action is to meet the management needs of maintaining open conditions in existing wildlife openings, roadsides of open roads and the open portions of utility lines through the use of manual, mechanical and chemical methods to control woody vegetation in addition to nonnative invasive plants. Because of their open conditions, these areas are often exploited by nonnative invasive plants and are therefore priority areas for treatment. Combining treatment of NNIP with treatments for maintaining open conditions will improve efficiency, reduce the number of treatments, enhance the management of these areas and help control NNIP. Implementation of the ten-year project is proposed to begin in the spring of 2010, followed by a comprehensive evaluation at the five year interval. Treatment of invasive plant species is dependent on funding and resources but our current program of work is between 1,000-2,000 acres per year.

Nonnative invasive species infestations are uncertain and dynamic; even the most complete inventory will never cover the actual infested area and will quickly be out of date. Treatment options may vary according to the particular invasive species, the size and configuration of the infestation, site location, and site conditions and monitoring will be required after treatment. Prior to any treatments of infestations, the proposed treatment would be reviewed by forest resource specialists in the areas of wildlife biology, botany, aquatics, soils, recreation, and heritage resources as outlined in a site-specific implementation checklist of required reviews. This checklist would also include documentation of any additional site-specific mitigation measures and consideration of potential cumulative effects to ensure that potential environmental impacts are within the scope of the impacts disclosed from the environmental analysis completed for these two proposed actions. Any new treatment method or new herbicide would require a separate environmental analysis and decision.

Purpose and Need for Action

Nonnative invasive plants (NNIP) are introduced species that can thrive in areas beyond their natural range. These plants are characteristically adaptable, aggressive, and have a high reproductive capacity. Their vigor combined with a lack of natural enemies often leads to outbreak populations. The Chief of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has identified nonnative invasive species as one of the four critical threats to USFS ecosystems (USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan: FY 2007–2012). While not all nonnative species are known to disrupt native

ecosystems, of particular concern are those that are successful at invading and rapidly spreading through natural habitats. Based on plot data collected through the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program, it has been estimated that 10% of the forested acres throughout Virginia are infested with NNIP (USFS Southern Research Station 2009). Numerous NNIP have been documented across the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests and many infested sites present an immediate threat to natural communities, rare species sites, and other sites of high public interest.

Executive Order 13112 requires federal agencies to prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts. Numerous federal laws have been passed over the years that pertain to noxious weeds and invasive plants. The purpose and need for this project is consistent with the USFS National Strategy and Implementation Plan for Invasive Species Management (USDA Forest Service 2004) and the Southern Regional Strategy for the Prevention, Control, and Eradication of NNIS (USDA Forest Service 2005). The George Washington and the Jefferson National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plans have forest wide direction to minimize the negative effects of NNIP on the landscape.

Specific needs that have been identified include:

- Reduce the risk of NNIP introduction into currently un-infested areas;
- Control NNIP that threaten rare communities and high-interest ecosystems such as botanical areas, research natural areas, TES species habitat, and wilderness;
- Eliminate emerging infestations of NNIP that have the potential to develop into large-scale ecosystem-damaging infestations;
- Control NNIP and woody plants that are impeding tree regeneration or damaging wildlife habitat improvements;
- Prevent the spread of invasive plants on adjacent private and public lands; and
- Be able to respond quickly to new invasive infestations before establishment and rapid spread.

Priority NNIP Species

The project proposal identifies the following 27 nonnative invasive species for control priority:

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	INVASIVENESS*	PRIORITY**
<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>	tree of heaven	1	1
<i>Akebia quinata</i>	chocolate vine	2	1
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	Japanese barberry	2	1
<i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i>	oriental bittersweet	1	1
<i>Ligustrum spp.</i>	privet	1	1
<i>Lolium arundinaceum</i>	tall fescue	2	1
<i>Lonicera maackii</i>	Amur honeysuckle	2	1
<i>Lonicera morrowii</i>	Morrow's honeysuckle	1	1
<i>Lonicera tatarica</i>	Tartarian honeysuckle	2	1
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	purple loosestrife	1	1
<i>Perilla frutescens</i>	beefsteak plant	3	1
<i>Persicaria perfoliatum</i>	mile-a minute	1	1
<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i>	Japanese knotweed	1	1
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	butterfly bush	L	2
<i>Carduus nutans</i>	musk thistle	2	2
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	bull thistle	2	2
<i>Elaeagnus umbellata</i>	autumn olive	1	2
<i>Lespedeza cuneata</i>	sericea lespedeza	1	2
<i>Paulownia tomentosa</i>	princess tree	2	2
<i>Pueraria montana var. lobata</i>	kudzu	1	2
<i>Rosa multiflora</i>	multiflora rose	1	2
<i>Spiraea japonica</i>	Japanese spiraea	2	2
<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	garlic mustard	1	3
<i>Centaurea biebersteinii</i>	spotted knapweed	1	3
<i>Lonicera japonica</i>	Japanese honeysuckle	1	3
<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>	Japanese stiltgrass	1	3
<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	coltsfoot	L	3

* **Invasiveness** is based on Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation: 1=Highly Invasive;2=Moderately invasive;3=Occasionally invasive; L=Locally invasive

** **Priority:** 1=high, eradicate wherever found

2=medium, control source populations and eradicate outliers

3=low, prevent invasion of last areas not invaded; eradicate high priority areas

Priority Treatment Areas for NNIP Control

The project proposal identifies the following areas for treatment priority:

Priority	Area
A	Threatened, Endangered or Sensitive Plant Species
A	Rare Communities/Special Biological Areas
A	Research Natural Areas
A	Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas (manual treatments only)
A	Roadsides
A	Trails and Trailheads
A	Stream Corridors
A	Any area in which ground or vegetation disturbing management has occurred and there is an existing population of a Priority 1 species (refer to Table 1)
B	Any area in which ground or vegetation disturbing management is planned and there is an existing population of Priority 1, 2 or 3 species (refer to Table 1)
B	Any area in which ground or vegetation disturbing management has occurred and there is an existing population of a Priority 2 species (refer to Table 1)
B	Any area with a new infestation of a Priority 2 species (refer to Table 1)
C	Any area in which ground or vegetation disturbing management has occurred and there is an existing population of a Priority 3 species (refer to Table 1)

Proposed Herbicides

Clopyralid is a selective herbicide that controls broadleaf herbs, primarily composites, legumes, and smartweeds (a perennial plant that forms dense colonies in shallow water). With selectivity to legumes, this chemical is particularly useful in the control of kudzu, mimosa, and lespedeza. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Transline™.

Dicamba is a somewhat selective herbicide that controls most annual and perennial broadleaf herbs and some woody species. It is known to be effective on autumn olive. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Vanquish™ and Overdrive™.

Glyphosate is a non-selective, broad spectrum herbicide that can be used to control many grasses, forbs, vines, shrubs, and tree species. Specific formulations of Glyphosate have been labeled for aquatic application. It has been proven effective on a wide variety of nonnative invasive plant species. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Accord™, Roundup™, and Rodeo™.

Hexazinone is a photosynthetic inhibitor selective to most hardwood tree species, shrubs and some grasses. It has been proven effective on lespedeza and privet. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Velpar™ and Pronone™.

Imazapic is a selective herbicide that is used primarily in and around populations of native, warm season grasses. Warm season grasses, many wildflower species, and legumes are resistant, while many cool season grasses (including nonnative species of fescue) and

broadleaf weeds are susceptible. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Plateau™.

Imazapyr is a selective herbicide that is used primarily in the control of hardwood trees and some species of grasses. It has been proven effective in the control of tree of heaven, princess tree, mimosa, autumn olive, privet, and multiflora rose. Use in combination with Triclopyr or Glyphosate can increase target specificity. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Arsenal™ and Chopper™.

Metsulfuron methyl is a systemic herbicide that is selective to woody species, broadleaf weed species, and many annual grasses. It has been proven to be effective in the control of lespedeza, Japanese honeysuckle, kudzu, and multiflora rose. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Escort™.

Triclopyr is a selective herbicide that controls many species of herbaceous and woody broadleaf weeds, but has little to no effect on grasses. Specific formulations of Triclopyr have been labeled for aquatic application. It has been proven effective on a wide variety of nonnative invasive plant species. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Garlon 3A™, Garlon 4™, and Pathfinder II™.

2,4-D is a selective herbicide that controls invasive broadleaf herbaceous plants and woody seedlings, but does not harm certain monocots (including grasses). Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Frontline™.

Fluazifop-P-Butyl is a monocot specific post-emergent herbicide primarily affecting grasses, sedges, and lilies. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Fusilade™.

Fenoxaprop-ethyl is a selective herbicide primarily used to control grasses. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Acclaim™.

Fosamine ammonium is a brush control agent that is diluted with water and applied as a foliar spray. It controls many woody species by inhibiting bud growth and treated plants will not leaf out or grow the season after treatment. Commercial brand-names include, but are not limited to Krenite)™.

Decision to be Made

The Forest Supervisor of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests is the Responsible Official for the decision to be made for both proposed actions. The decision-maker will answer the following questions based on the environmental analysis:

- Whether the proposed action would result in significant environmental effects that would require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement, or if there is a finding of no significant impact.
- If significant impacts are not anticipated, the Forest Supervisor will determine whether the proposed action will proceed as described above, as modified by an alternative, or not at all.
- Mitigation measures and monitoring requirements to be implemented by the Forest Service.
- Whether there needs to be a separate decision for each of the proposed actions or they can be combined in one decision.

Your Involvement

We realize that many users of the Forest, private landowners, and representatives from state agencies, federal agencies, and organizations may be interested in this project. Therefore, we are mailing this letter to a large number of people but we are not mailing a more detailed scoping report (30 pages). **If you are interested in the scoping report for more details about the different invasive species and treatment methods, you may: 1) access it from our internet**

website at http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/projects_plans/projects/; 2) request a mailed copy by sending an e-mail message to comments-southern-georgewashington-jefferson@fs.fed.us; or 3) call our Forest Botanist, Fred Huber at 540-265-5157.

We welcome your involvement with this decision. To assist in determining issues and environmental effects associated with the proposal, the Forest Service is seeking comments, suggestions, and information regarding this proposed project. You are invited to respond verbally, electronically, or in writing. Responses will be considered in the environmental analysis process and will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and available for public inspection.

In accordance with 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3), individuals or organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the following information:

- 1) Your name and address.
- 2) Title of the Proposed Action.
- 3) Specific comments (in accordance with 36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision.
- 4) Your signature or other means of identification verification. For organizations, a signature or other means of identification verification must be provided for the individual authorized to represent your organization.

Comments must be postmarked or received within 30 days beginning the day after publication of this notice in *The Roanoke Times* (Roanoke, VA) which will occur after the date of this letter. Comments may be faxed to 540-265-5145. Comments may be mailed electronically to our office, in a common digital format, to comments-southern-georgewashington-jefferson@fs.fed.us. When sending electronic comments, please note the name of the project in the subject line of the electronic mailing (i.e. NNIP Comments). Oral or hand-delivered comments must be received within our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the following address:

**Fred Huber, Project Team Leader
George Washington and Jefferson National Forests
Invasive Species Control Scoping Comments
5162 Valleypointe Parkway
Roanoke, VA 24019**

If you have questions about this project, please contact Fred Huber, Project Team Leader at (540) 265-5157.

Sincerely,

/s/ Maureen Hyzer
MAUREEN HYZER
Forest Supervisor